



PAFFREL

PARLIAMENTARY GENERAL ELECTION

08th April, 2010

First Situation Report of 11/03/2010

Introduction:

The Commissioner of Election had made arrangements to conduct the elections for the members to the seventh Parliament on 8th April of 2010 as the Sixth Parliament was dissolved before the end of 9th of February 2010 although constitutionally the parliament could have continued until the 22nd of April 2010, the day of the mandatory dissolution. It is significant that nominations were submitted to represent all the districts of the Island after the complete eradication of terrorism that affected the country through a period of whole thirty years. The submissions of nominations of the contestants from the relevant political parties and the independent groups were finalised at the district secretariats during the period extending from 19th to 26th February 2010. It was specially noted that several districts, namely Gampaha, Kalutara, Kandy, Batticaloa, Digamadulla, Trincomalee and Kegalle. The number of the independent groups who offered to contest this election exceeded the number of the registered political parties. In Digamadulla alone the number of independent groups was 48.

We herein have an annex No.01 record some preliminary information that we consider is relevant.

Annexes 01

OBSERVATIONS OF PAFFREL

Preparation has been made to make observation as we have done continuously during the years from 1988 in all the elections up to now. Several civil society organizations including Sarvodaya, nationally and divisibility with us in our network of observation of the election activities are involved divisionally in the current programme also. We launch our programme duly and systematically. Since the Nomination day of 9th February we are working our schedule in three phases, namely the Pre- election period, Election Day and Post election period.

Special Complaint Unit

A special complaint unit has been setup at the PAFFREL head office to handle complaints from pre election to post election periods inclusive of complaints received on the Election Day. The complaints received from the monitoring system set up by PAFFREL will be handled by experienced lawyers as intermediaries by this special complaint unit.

After the confirmation of the complaints received from all monitoring sources arrangements have been made for any civil society, political party, independent group or any person interested in election related work to get any information on request. It is also open to every body to source with any information they possess.

PRE ELECTION PERIOD

No sooner the Presidential election was over we organized the preliminary ground work for the observation of election activities of the contesting parties for the parliamentary general elections. We entered into discussions with the district and divisional organization and formulated the background for our monitoring work. Accordingly we established our offices at district and divisional level offering all civilians, all political parties and independent groups to obtain necessary information to record their complaints. These are open to all civilians. In addition to these, arrangements have been made through our coordinating offices to provide access to all civil society organizations to make observations of the ground situation regarding the election process. Further our long term observers are available like in the last presidential election for any assistance in connection with the monitoring activity.

POSTAL VOTING

The Period for receiving applications for postal voting is fixed from 16th February 2010-to 26th February 2010 and the Commissioner of Elections has made all arrangements to have the voting on the two days, 25th, 26th February of 2010. Presently lists of qualified postal voters are been prepared by the department of elections. PAFFREL has made arrangements to deploy volunteer observers to significant number or polling stations covering such as police, Ceylon transport board, army camp, education offices and hospitals etc, to observe the postal voting on these two days.

ELECTION DAY

Arrangements have been made to deploy stationary observers to every polling station covering 25 administrative districts. For this purpose we will conduct a series of training workshops in all the polling divisions through out the country. We have conducted

district dialogues with our collaborating organizations in the districts on the methodology of our monitoring programme.

An experienced and competent Asian election monitoring organization, ANFREL has expressed their willingness to send a group of 50 observers to monitor the parliamentary general election 2010. Permission has been obtained from the Commissioner of Elections to utilize these observers. They come from Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Burma etc. They will be deployed to observe the electoral process in the three phases on monitoring from 28th of March 2010.

ALL PARTY OPERATIONS UNIT

The recent effort of running an all party operations unit at the elections secretariat Colombo and at 331 divisional secretariats has proved to be a successful intervention in the history of election monitoring. This exercise is done with the participation of the senior staff of the Department of Elections, Police and Senior Representatives of the Political Parties. The objective is to take immediate action to solve issues arise at various levels in the society and transmitted to the unit during the electoral process.

POST ELECTION OBSERVATION

After the date of poll, as usual PAFFREL will be vigilant and through her network of district offices, divisional offices and long term observers will observe the situation for a further period of 14 days.

ESTABLISHING IDENTITY OF VOTERS AT POLL

As in the past elections establishment of identity of the voter is made compulsory to prevent any impersonation. The Commissioner of Elections has issued a list of documents that could be used to prove the identity at the polling centres. For voters who do not have anyone of those identification documents may apply to the local Asst. Commissioners of Elections with two photographs of 1" x 1 ¼" size to obtain a temporary identity card to exercise his / her franchise.

The valid documents are;

1. National Identity Card issued by the Registrar General of Persons.
2. Valid driving license
3. Valid Passport
4. Pensioners Identity card
5. Elder's Identity card

6. Identity Card issued to the clergy by Registrar General of Persons.
7. Temporary Identity Cards issued by the Registrar General of Persons for President Election 2010.

NORTH EAST

As there are still almost 100,000 internally displaced people housed at welfare centers at Cheddikulam, in vavuniya,, we as a civic minded volunteer organization is focusing our attention on the political rights of the voters in those centers. One of the issues they faced during the last Presidential Election was the inability of the voters to establish their identity. We roughly estimate about 10,000 of those voters to be without ant type of legal document to establish their identity.

In the district of Kilinochchi we witness an accelerated resettlement programme that is being implemented. In the divisions of Thunukkai and Karachchi of Kilinochchi and Manthai East and Oddisuddan of Mullaitivu reselement is going on.

We understand that voters in these districts have to be made aware of the Election Rules and regulations in order to exercise the franchise properly. We had discussions with the commissioner of elections on the subject and received his acknowledgement to our request to be a facilitator to carry out voter education programmes for the vulnerable lot of voters. Further we will assist the voters who are in the welfare centers to obtain the identity cards issued by the department of elections. When compared to the southern part of Sri Lanka political campaigning by the candidates is at a fairly low profile. But there are signs that as the days roll it will catch up but not up to the level of that in the south. Two incidents have been reported to our operations secretariat in Colombo. One in the polling division of kalkudah, motor bicycle of pa's candidate M.H.S.Faizar had been set on fire and supporters of Fariel Ashroff in Ampara polling division have been assaulted. There are no incidents reported from north except for the one at Mannar.

The supporters of Minister Richard Badiudeen beat a supporter of the SLMC candidate Noordeen Masoor on the 8th night, in March 2010 and were admitted to the hospital. The following day the shops were closed and a protest was organized by the traders of the town. Subsequently the matter was brought under control and by 10.30am normalcy was restored.

GENERAL OBSERVATION

With the conclusion of the presidential election the nominations were called for the parliamentary general elections. We notice some activities connected with the presidential election bear some influence on the parliamentary election too. Especially after presidential election the police officers and other government officers who discharged their duties in an efficient and effective manner were transferred out. We observe this as a signal for the officers who will be working on the forthcoming elections. Although there is a provision for the contesting parties to establish campaign offices at the polling division we understand most of them do not care to register them with the authorities concerned. In the same manner though it is required by the electoral law to disclose the candidate's assets and liabilities only a very few have come forward in honoring the law of the land. We highly appreciate their respect for the law.

Our monitoring report is for the period 19-02-2010 to 10-03-2010. We have received 32 complaints for the period under consideration. Out of which we can confirm 27. When we analyze the complaints we understand most of them are intra party confrontations.

POLITICAL PARTIES

According to the existing system of elections to parliament a great responsibility is placed on the political parties to see that the elections are conducted in the most democratic way. Because of the preferential voting system we have experienced intra party conflicts to a significant level in our election. In any democratic country a powerful opposition guarantees a better democracy. The democratic process has to be an inclusive process where the interest of the minor political groups also taken in to consideration when it comes to governance. PAFFREL anticipates having dialogues with the contesting political parties and individual groups to improve on the process of democracy and non-violence.

DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

The department of election takes the necessary steps in order to conduct a free and fair election. The Commissioner and his staff contribute tirelessly towards achieving this goal. His office has taken necessary interventions to stop the unlawful propaganda connected with the elections. It is the prime duty of the contesting parties to support his efforts so that an environment necessary for the conduct of free and fair election will be maintained.

DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

As in the concluded presidential election the role of the police will be of high priority for free and fair elections. We are confident that the department of police will extend their fullest cooperation and support to the Commissioner of Elections in achieving high standards in the process of democratization in our beloved land.